DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 950 SO 014 932

AUTHOR Hornberger, Timothy R.
TITLE A Curriculum to Change Attitudes toward the Amish.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Amish; *Attitude Change; *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Education; Educational Research; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; Language Arts; *Majority Attitudes; *Religious Cultural Groups

ABSTRACT

The effects of a grade 6 reading/language arts curriculum designed to help non-Amish students develop an appreciation and understanding of Amish culture were examined. The study took place in a Pennsylvania township near a large Amish settlement. Two classes (one experimental group, one control group) were administered pre- and post-semantic differential scales. Adjective pairs examined evaluative factors (social-unsociable, foolish-wise, etc.) and potency factors (weak-strong, humorous-serious, etc.). Students in the experimental group studied the Amish for 2 hours a day, 4 days a week for a 6-week period. The control group studied a unit on Canada. Because initial semantic differential scores could not be adjusted, the analysis accounts for differences within each of the groups rather than between groups. The experimental group demonstrated a significant attitude change toward the Amish; the change consisted of an increase in posttest scores on the evaluative factor and a decrease on the potency factor (i.e., students who studied the Amish saw them as more gentle, peaceful, and submissive). The control group revealed no significant attitude change on the evaluative factor and a significant change on the potency factory (i.e., they perceived the Amish as less peaceful, gentle, and submissive). (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED232950

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Timothy R. Hornberger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A CURRICULUM TO CHANGE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AMISH

by

Timothy R. Hornberger

1982

SO 014 932

SO

A CURRICULUM TO CHANGE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AMISH

Many educators recognize the fact that children should come to know and respect the cultural contributions of other groups. These educators claim that if each group understands the cultural contributions of other groups an appreciation will develop for that group but, more importantly, a more thorough understanding and appreciation of one's own culture will take place.

But few educational programs in our schools recognize the contributions of the Old Order Amish to our society. Furthermore, conversations with children (including those living near Amish settlements) reveal that few children understand this religious group and their agrarian way of life.

The primary purpose of this study was to design and implement a reading/language arts curriculum to develop an understanding and appreciation of Amish culture in non-Amish children. A secondary purpose of the study was to determine the effects of the curriculum on the attitudes of non-Amish children toward the Amish.

Reading literature about the Amish, writing short stories and poems about the Amish, and visiting an Amish farm and school were some of the activities used to develop positive attitudes toward the Amish. In addition, cooking Amish food, reading Amish poetry, and playing Amish games were activities included in this reading/ language arts curriculum.

A review of the literature on attitude change shows that few researchers have designed and implemented curricula to produce

attitude change in children. Among these, two will be cited. Gibboney (1959) taught a six-week unit on Mexico to two sixth-grade classes of different socio-economic status. Results on an attitude scale showed that the higher status group was more accepting toward Mexicans, but the attitude change was not significant. In another study, Pecoraro (1972) taught a unit on American Indian culture to groups of Indian and non-Indian students. The results show a statistically significant (.01) attitude change toward American Indians in those children who studied American Indian culture.

The Amish

The name Amish comes from the name of their leader, Jacob Amman, a religious dissident who formed the group in the late 1600's in Europe. In 1727 the first Amish families came to Pennsylvania from Switzerland, and today there are over 60,000 Amish living in the United States and Canada (Hostetler and Huntington, 1971).

In his book Amish Society, Hostetler (1968) lists five major principles of the Old Order Amish sect. They are: (1) remain separate from the world outside the Amish community, (2) agree to be baptized in the church, (3) agree to obey all the rules of the church, (4) practice shunning and excommunication as a means of dealing with transgressors, and (5) earn a living by farming, or a closely related activity such as carpentry, mason work, or other forms of manual work.

Procedure

Sample

Two classes consisting of 47 sixth-grade students from the

Manheim Township Middle School, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, served as the experimental group; an equal number of students (N = 47) from the same school served as the control group. Both groups were selected from 15 sixth-grade classes, and were matched with respect to intelligence, achievement in science, social studies, and language arts, and socio-economic status. Mean IQ scores for subjects in the experimental and control groups were 108 and 111 respectively, according to the results of the Standard Test of Educational Ability. Results from the Science Research Associates Achievement Test were used to match students with respect to achievement in science, social studies, and language arts. Based on data obtained from student records both groups were equally matched with respect to socio-economic status; further, the records showed that the mean family income was well above the national average.

Located near one of the largest Amish settlements in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the Manheim Township School District is one of the most affluent districts in Lancaster County. Many of the children's parents hold professional positions in the large industrial plants located near Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Instrumentation

An attitude scale to measure attitudes toward the Amish could not be found, and general attitude scales measuring attitudes toward any race were found to be unsuitable for the purpose of this study. Therefore, to measure attitudes toward the Amish a semantic differential was designed by the researcher using the method developed by Osgood, Succi, and Tannenbaum (1970).

Polar adjectives for the semantic differential were selected and arranged at opposite ends of a series of ten five-point scales. Adjective pairs from evaluative and potency factors were selected to anchor the scales. The following adjective pairs comprised the evaluative factors: sociable-unsociable, clean-dirty, foolish-wise, interesting-boring, successful-unsuccessful. Potency factor adjective pairs were: weak-strong, humorous-serious, constricted-spacious, severe-lenient, soft-hard. The following illustrates the application of the procedure.

Semantic Differential

Amish Clothing

sociable	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	unsociable
weak	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	strong
clean	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	dirty
humorous	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	serious
foolish	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	wise
constricted	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	spacious
interesting	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	boring
severe	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	lenient
successful	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	unsuccessful
soft	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	hard

Administration

As the first step in the study, all subjects in the experimental and control groups were administered a semantic differential test based on the following concepts: Amish children, Amish adults, Amish home, Amish leisure, Amish language, Amish education, and Amish clothing. Thus, each subject completed seven subtests of the

semantic differential.

Following the pre-test, the students in the experimental group were told that they would be studying the Amish for the next six weeks, for about two hours a day, four days a week. After the students in the experimental group had studied the Amish for six weeks, these students were given a post-test on the same semantic differential test. While children in the experimental group were studying the Amish, children in the control group were studying a unit on Canada. They too, were given the tests before and following the same six-week period.

Scoring

For purposes of scoring, the unfavorable poles of the semantic differential (e.g., unsociable and dirty) were assigned the score of "1" and the favorable poles (e.g., sociable and clean) were assigned the score of "5". Intermediate points (2,3,4) were also assigned scores as illustrated by the following example:

weak ___5___ : ___4___ : ___3___ : ___2___ : ___1___ : Strong

Hence, a score of 25 was the maximum score for each factor (evaluative and potency) for each subtest. Similarly, a score of 175 on each factor was the maximum score for all seven Amish concepts. The numerical quantities were then tabulated for each factor on each concept and treated statistically.

Anonymity for the subjects was a chief consideration during the administration of each semantic differential; therefore, a correlation of initial and final scores for each subject on the semantic differential was not available and the t-test for dependent groups could not be performed. Further, initial differences on the semantic differential between the experimental and the control group could not be adjusted.

Results

The results that follow are an analysis of differences within the experimental and the control groups. Because initial semantic differential scores could not be adjusted, no attempt was made to determine whether or not experimental group scores were significantly greater than those of the control group.

The results reported in Table 1 show that the experimental group revealed a significant change in attitude toward the Amish at the .01 level with respect to the evaluative factor. The change consisted of an increase in post-test scores on the evaluative factor.

The results show that the experimental group revealed a significant change in attitude toward the Amish at the .05 level with respect to the potency factor. The change consisted of a decrease in post-test scores on the potency factor. These results suggest that the students who studied the Amish saw the Amish as more gentle, peaceful and submissive at the end of the study.

The control group revealed no significant attitude change toward the Amish with respect to the evaluative factor.

The control group revealed a significant attitude change at the .01 level with respect to the potency factor. In other words, this group saw the Amish as less gentle, peaceful and submissive at the end of the unit.

Discussion

While the following factors do not deal directly with why there was an increase in the potency factor for the control group, they do explain how children in the control group could have altered their attitudes toward the Amish.

(1) Since both groups were from the same school, it was impossible to prevent children from discussing the unit. Due to circumstances beyond the control of the researcher, the experimental and the control group were placed in adjacent rooms.

(2) Another factor that could have affected the results of the control group was the well publicized shunning[1] case of Robert L. Bear that developed while the study was being conducted. Although Bear is a Mennonite, the Amish still practice shunning and most of the sixth-grade classes in the Manheim Township Middle School became embroiled in this controversial case. Photographs and articles about the case appeared in local newspapers and sixth-grade teachers discussed the case with their students. The discussions showed that many children considered shunning to be cruel and unusual punishment, while others felt that this practice is necessary to keep church members in line.

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to design and implement a reading/language arts curriculum to develop an understanding and appreciation of Amish culture in non-Amish children. A secondary purpose of the study was to determine the effects of the curriculum on the attitudes of non-Amish children toward the Amish.

Sixth-grade students in an experimental and a control group were administered a pre-semantic differential test to determine their attitudes toward the Amish. Following the pre-test, students in the experimental group studied a unit on Canada. At the end

---

[1]Shunning is a severe form of punishment used by members of the Amish and Mennonite faiths. It is the custom for family and church members to terminate all business and social relations with a shunned individual.

of the six-week unit both groups were given a post-semantic differential test to ascertain attitude change toward the Amish in those children who studied the Amish.

References

Davis, Frederick B. Educational Measurement and Their Interpretation. California,: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1964.

Gibboney, Richard. "Socioeconomic Status and Achievement in Social Studies," Elementary School Journal, 59: 340-346, 1959.

Hornberger, Timothy R. "Design, Implementation and Evaluation of a Curriculum To Change Attitudes in Sixth-Grade Students Toward the Old Order Amish," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1976.

Hostetler, John A. Amish Society. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.

Keough, William T. "Outcast: Farmer Fights Mennonite 'Shunning,' "The Sunday Bulletin"(November 23, 1975), p. 3.

Osgood, Charles E., Succi, George A., & Tannenbaum, Percy H. "Attitude Measurement," Summers, Gene F., (Ed.) Attitude Measurement. New York: Rand McNally and Co., 227-233, 1970.

Pecoraro, Joseph. "The Effects of a Series of Special Lessons On Indian History and Culture Upon the Attitudes of Indian and Non-Indian Students," Journal of Education 154: 60-78, 1972.

TABLE 1

PRE- AND POST-TEST AVERAGE MEAN SCORES FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS/EVALUATIVE AND POTENCY FACTORS-SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Group	Factor	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Difference	Critical Difference	Standard error of measurement of average change	Sig. Level
Experimental (N=47)	Evaluative	134.8	141.0	6.2	1.56 (.15 level)	1.08	<.01
Experimental (N=47)	Potency	108.0	105.0	3.0	2.33 (.05 level)	1.19	<.05
Control (N=47)	Evaluative	123.7	124.1	.4	1.7 (.15 level)	1.18	Not Significant
Control (N=47)	Potency	98.4	102.2	3.8	1.8 (.15 level)	1.25	<.01
Experimental (N=47)	Evaluative / Potency		141.0 / 105.0	36.0	2.73 (.01 level)	1.06	<.01
Control (N=47)	Evaluative / Potency		124.1 / 102.2	21.9	3.15 (.01 level)	1.22	<.01

BEST COPY AVAILABLE